

EDITORIAL COMMENT



THE SUBJECT OF REGISTRATION

DR. BRISTOW'S address before the New York State Nurses, which we give as the leading article in this number, is the most valuable summing up of the whole subject of registration that we have had. Here we have in a nutshell a history of the origin of registration, a clear statement of what medical registration has done for the individual physician, and what it is to do for the individual nurse, provided all nurses who are *entitled* to its protection take advantage of it and register at once.

The fact that the New York State bill is not prohibitory is both its strength and its weakness. If the law in the very beginning had compelled nurses either to register or discontinue to practise their profession, as was required of the physicians when the medical law went into effect, great numbers of reputable untrained women who were dependent upon nursing would have been deprived of a means of earning a livelihood.

Because of its justice the law is strong. It is weak because, not being compulsory, nurses who are entitled to register, and from indifference or petty economy do not do so, are permitted to do the greatest injustice to other nurses who are public-spirited, and who desire the protection that *universal* registration would give.

Dr. Bristow has made the obligation very plain. He has shown the sort of thing that nurses have to complete with in quack nursing schools, that are growing in every section of the country, and, strange to say, always with medical men (so-called) as proprietors.

Correspondence schools are but one of the many forms of quack nursing institutions. The only protection nurses have is in the right to use a title that shall be the "hall-mark" of distinction between the nurses graduated from training-schools registered by the Regents, as in New York State, as maintaining proper standards of education, and the women who have either no diploma at all, or one from some kind of a quack school that has no legal status.

If the law is to do any good, all nurses entitled to registration must register.

ACTION OF THE SUPERINTENDENTS.

At the meeting of the superintendents of training-schools held in Pittsburg, just a short time before Dr. Bristow gave his address to the nurses in New York, "Correspondence Schools for Nurses" was the subject of a very lively discussion, and the following resolution was offered by Miss McIsaac, of Chicago, seconded by Miss Keating, of Buffalo, and carried unanimously:

"WHEREAS, The establishment of correspondence schools for nurses has been called to the notice of this society; and

"WHEREAS, Any method of training nurses apart from a hospital, where both practical and theoretical teaching may be obtained, is impracticable and inadequate; be it

"Resolved, That this society put upon record its unqualified disapproval of such schools, as alike detrimental to the public and to the nursing profession."

Thus the great teaching body of the nursing profession put itself upon record as condemning any method of training nurses apart from a hospital.

The theory of nursing may be taught theoretically, but *nursing* can only be taught by nurses at the bedside of the patient.

MRS. ROBB'S WELCOME TO NURSES

STRANGE things certainly are happening in the nursing profession. Several times during the past year nurses have been invited to speak to nurses at graduating exercises, and surely nurses would seem to be the *fitting* persons to welcome a class as they are about to join the ranks of the great nursing body. What a contrast between Mrs. Robb's words of welcome sympathy and the ideals she held up to the Johns Hopkins graduating class, and the hackneyed half-hour of "don'ts" that one has been accustomed to hear for the past thirty years! It is only to be regretted that her address will not be more widely read by that great public that feels it a duty always to pick a flaw in a nurse.

Mrs. Robb has shown that many of the faults of nurses, generally speaking, are the faults of the home education and of the period in which we live. Her subject has been carefully thought out, and she speaks from great experience, both from the standpoint of a teacher of nurses, as well as from that of a woman of broad experience in the world. We need more of such plain-speaking from the nurses' point of view.

THE VALUE OF LITTLE THINGS

THE nurse who has at her command many little devices, simple but ingenious, for increasing the comfort of her patients will often succeed with her cases where others fail. This is particularly true during protracted illnesses, when the dissatisfaction of the patient requires a more or less frequent change of nurses. Many of these complaints arise because the little details which add to the patient's comfort are either unknown or unheeded, and we are, perhaps, too prone to call them whims and to dismiss the little fault-findings with scant attention. We should make notes from time to time of the little devices attracting our attention. It is almost impossible to go through any hospital, no matter how poor the equipment (and it is often in the poorly equipped that one sees those things most valuable to the private nurse) without seeing small contrivances which are too valuable to be lost.

The nurse in private practice is constantly called upon to use her ingenuity in order to secure results under new and inconvenient conditions, and in time she unconsciously, perhaps, has a complete set of devices and contrivances that would be worth a fortune to the nurse just starting out. The obligations of the profession call for a freer exchange of ideas upon such simple but important points.

How many nurses have ever thought to remove the taste of castor-oil from a patient's mouth by giving her a large piece of the soft part of bread, to crowd into her mouth, put her teeth well into once, and then spit out? All the oil clinging to the tongue and teeth is removed, and a thin slice of lemon held in the mouth for a few minutes removes the taste of the oil completely. This simple method was learned when the writer was little more than a child in her own home, and has been used by her in both hospital and private nursing for many years. It would seem hardly necessary to caution even the youngest probationers *not* to give cold water directly after castor-oil, but we have recently actually seen this done when visiting a friend in a private hospital who was paying enormous

rates for the most "skilful" care. We question whether any nurse is competent to administer a dose of castor-oil until she has been obliged to swallow one herself. In fact, an illness is a necessary part of a nurse's education if she is to appreciate the value of those little things that make for comfort, and upon which depend her popularity.

GREAT WORK FOR CHILDREN

THE Christmas month being a season when the happiness and well-being of children is the predominating thought in the minds of most people, it would seem to be an especially appropriate time for our readers to be told something more in detail of the great work that has been done for the children of the New York schools by nurses during the past year—a work that contributes not only to the health of the children, but to their intellectual and moral development by preventing unnecessary loss of that all too brief school period.

Miss Rogers has told the story in a very plain way, letting the facts and figures that she has presented speak for the quality of the work and the devotion of the nurses engaged in it.

When we consider that this school work, with its far-reaching influences, is a nurse's idea, we may feel doubly proud of the splendid results shown in Miss Rogers's paper. Other cities are preparing to follow New York's example, and this field for nurses will broaden with each year.

QUESTIONS OF THE HOUR IN NEW YORK CITY

WE find New York City agitating the question of a County Society. A circular letter will be found in the official department in which the plan is outlined, and we shall from time to time report progress in these pages. New York City being the great nursing centre of the country, such a plan as is being contemplated will be very far-reaching in its influence, and for that reason is of general interest. Boston, Philadelphia, and several of the smaller cities have a central or county club, but New York, owing to its great size, has been slow to take up this idea. Abuses such as are shown in Miss Thornton's letter, the need of a central directory governed by nurses, would seem to demand greater concerted effort on the part of both nurses and hospitals in New York than is now given.

We are hearing much also of the need of a nurses' hotel, where, on a strictly business basis, the nurses may live in independence and comfort in a building conducted upon the lines of the new women's hotel, the "Martha Washington," which has proved to be such a success. It has been suggested that stock for such an enterprise might easily be raised among the nurses of New York, and when we think of the great number of nurses, popular estimate being eight thousand, the plan would seem to be entirely feasible. If it could only be shown in a practical way that for the same money nurses could exchange their too often dark, crowded apartments for light and comfortable rooms, we believe this plan could be carried out with little difficulty. What the scheme seems to lack is a leader.

THE TRIP TO BERLIN

THE trip abroad which is being planned with special reference to the International Congress of Nurses to be held in Berlin during the early summer promises to be a most exceptional opportunity for a party to see some of the

principal points of interest in Europe under conditions both congenial and economical.

Miss Thornton, who is arranging the details of the journey, is giving much time and study to the matter, and those who join her party may be sure of getting the best possible return for their money. In a trip of ten weeks, for instance, one may see a great deal and bring back many delightful impressions, or one may get little out of it; it all depends upon making the best possible use of every day and hour.

The southern, or Mediterranean, route is much to be preferred if Italy is to be visited. The approach is most beautiful, and to see Naples and Vesuvius for the first time from the sea is a picture never to be forgotten.

Two days in Naples would be better than no Naples at all. Pompeii enfolds a great world of history, and may be easily seen in a day. "Baedeker" says "not less than a fortnight in Rome," but if time must be limited to five or six days, the greatest of her treasures may be seen in that time—of course, in a superficial way. St. Peter's, the Vatican, and the Castle of St. Angelo, the Colosseum and the Forum, the Capitol and the never-to-be-forgotten drive to the Appian Way, and much more may be included in a stay of only a few days. We once spent a month in Rome and visited St. Peter's many times, but the picture that we carry in our mind is of the first view, when we crossed the threshold of the entrance way.

So we would say a few days in Florence and Venice, a longer time in the Italian lake country and Switzerland, for sight-seeing is fatiguing and nurses are tired women; then, after Berlin and the Congress, a little more of Germany, a week in Paris if possible, and all the time there is left in England. Here one may roam about without a guide, and every inch is of interest to Americans. Where time is so limited, one gets so much more out of it where one can not only see but hear and be understood.

There is not only the pleasure for the time in a trip of this kind, but one's horizon is so extended. The newspaper is read with greater intelligence. Every Italian laborer is regarded with a new interest, for to have seen his country gives us a new attitude towards every foreigner within our gates.

Nurses as a class need such recreation, and money is never regretted spent in this way.

NEW YORK NURSES AND TRAINING-SCHOOLS

THE circular letter of the secretary found on another page gives minute instruction for filling out the blanks for registration. The Board of Nurse Examiners are very desirous to register the regular graduates who are entitled to register without examination before the examinations for the non-graduates begin in June. Nurses may register any time within three years from the passage of the bill, but it is requested that they will do so soon, to aid the examiners in the work before them.

We wish to remind the superintendents of training-schools of that clause in the bill which provides that graduates from training-schools *registered by the Regents as maintaining proper standards* may, upon complying with certain conditions, be registered, etc. Many of the very women who worked the hardest for the passage of the bill have neglected to fill out the blanks for the registration of training-schools issued from the Regents' office, and the work of the examiners is being greatly obstructed by their negligence.

A PIANO FOR ARMY NURSES

WE are told that private information recently received at the Surgeon-General's Office disclosed the fact that army nurses are not entirely dependent on their surroundings for their happiness. Even at so isolated a post as the one at Fort Bayard the nurses report themselves as happy, most interested in their work, and getting no end of amusement incidentally, and quite a considerable amount of money, from a little bank in the middle of their dining-table. The chief nurse, at the suggestion of the commanding officer's wife, requires them to deposit in the bank five cents for every time they use a slang word or expression, and ten cents for carelessly making a spot upon the table-cloth. But this bank has a wider field of usefulness than at first appears in its object to purify the English and keep spotless table-linen. The fund so deposited was to go towards a piano which the nurses were ambitious enough to endeavor to buy. Having purchased attractive furniture for use in their little parlor and sitting-room, they put themselves into communication with various Eastern manufacturers to ascertain the cost of a piano, but finally decided to save freight and purchase from a firm in Silver City,—the nearest town,—nine miles from the hospital.

The letter giving this information was so full of good cheer and evidences of contentment that it was brought to the attention of the Surgeon-General, who immediately exclaimed, "Why, the nurses need not buy that piano. They shall have it given to them." An order was sent that proper application should be made to the Surgeon-General and a piano would be forthcoming. The only proviso was to be that the piano should be a *good one*, no cheap affair that would go to pieces in a year. It was then suggested that the money the nurses had contributed towards this piano fund should be put into books, and this was met with the reply, "But the Surgeon-General will give them all the books they want." And so Mrs. Kinney was permitted to write the nurses of this generous offer and of the answer of the Surgeon-General to her acknowledgments, of his kindness, namely, "I am only too glad to do anything I can to make them happy and contented."

It seems but a very few years since it came to our knowledge that a requisition for rocking-chairs for the nurses at a certain hospital was regarded by the authorities at Washington as most unnecessary extravagance. It speaks volumes for the quality of the service given that the attitude of the Medical Department has so changed towards the Army Nurse Corps, and we believe in time the army service will call for only the highest type of women, and that the recognition will be the same as that accorded to all officers of the government.

CHRISTMAS, 1903

THE year 1903 will always be a memorable one to nurses, because in this year trained nursing has been given a legal status. State registration is a fact. Nurses have been brought into closer sympathy, nursing education has made great strides.

We enter upon the Christmas season with thankful hearts that we have been permitted to be a factor in the work accomplished. We wish a "Merry Christmas" to all those, far and near, who have fought in the battles of the year now closing, and a "Happy New Year" to those who will carry on the good work in the year to follow.